

# record research

THE MAGAZINE OF RECORD STATISTICS AND INFORMATION

30 CENTS

## MIFF MOLE

FIRST TRAIL BLAZER

OF MODERN JAZZ TROMBONE

by Richard DuPage



(photo courtesy of Jack Bradley and Miff)

One hot summer afternoon in 1911 a bespectacled, 13-year-old boy boarded a trolley car in Hempstead, Long Island, bound for his home in neighboring Roosevelt. Under his arm he clutched an object enclosed in a large paper bag. Working his way to the rear platform of the car, he sat down and, finding himself alone, carefully removed from the bag a somewhat beat-up alto horn, upright model, purchased for a few hard-earned dollars at a Salvation Army store. The boy raised the mouthpiece to his lips, took a breath and emitted a hearty toot. That toot would make musical history and eventually launch the boy into becoming one of the outstanding brassmen of jazz.

Irving Milfred Mole was born in Roosevelt, L.I., March 11, 1898 - with a Long Island ancestral background of over a hundred years. The nickname, "Miff," came from "Milf," his original nickname, derived from Milfred. Miff's formal music life began at eleven when he took violin lessons for three years. All his life, however, Miff had musical desires which were directed toward blowing rather than bowing, which led to the acquisition of the upright alto, or "peck" horn, as it is referred to in military band vernacular because of its chief function of supplying an after beat accompaniment. Miff was self-taught on piano, and proficient. At fourteen, after working during the day with his father as house painter, he occupied his evenings accompanying silent movies at the local nickelodeon in Roosevelt, a tiny establishment which still stands today in operation on the main thoroughfare of the village.

About this time, Miff heard a brass band parading through Roosevelt and a trombone glissando made such an instant and lasting impression on the boy that there was no longer any question as to his musical goal and young Miff sent away for a mail order trombone. Again self-instruction filled the need of the moment and Miff learned to play the instrument by first striking each note on the piano and finding the appropriate position on the trombone. Before ever taking a trombone lesson he was playing professionally.

Prior to the trombone, however, Miff frequently sat in for his father on violin in a trio consisting of violin, cornet and harp which furnished the music for many local country-style dances. Occasionally he would interject some rapid Venuti-like improvisations, much to the consternation of the harpist. This fast jazz technique on fiddle was in no small measure responsible for the amazing technique he developed on trombone. In other words, Miff, in addition to possessing the ability to play the instrument expertly in the accepted manner, was mentally and practically able to apply a heretofore impossible violinistic technique to the trombone, and not just gymnastically - it was always good music.

Miff's first professional job on trombone was at the College Arms Cafe in Brooklyn where he remained two years. During this engagement Miff, at sixteen, began legitimate study of the trombone under Charles Randall, a thorough trombonist and an

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important inspiration to Miff. Charlie Randall, in addition to being a legitimate trombonist, was adept at the early jazz and popular music. Between 1916 and 1921 Charlie played and recorded with Ed Kirkeby's Merry Melody Men. Kirkeby, during this period was assistant manager of the Columbia New York studios. In 1921 he took over an obscure group known as the California Ramblers - the rest is musical history in relation to that organization.

The second job which followed was a short stay at the Alamo Club on 125th Street in New York. Then Miff became a member of the newly organized Original Memphis Five, a cooperative band comprising Phil Napoleon, cornet; Miff Mole, trombone; Johnny Costello, clarinet; Frank Signorelli, piano; and Conrad Croningold, drums. Their first job was at the Harvard Inn on Coney Island. The bouncer was Al Capone, and Miff swears that the mobster was responsible for a bullet hole he found in his trombone bell on returning from an intermission.

An important early influence on Miff was trombonist Eddie Edwards, then playing at Reisenweber's with the Original Dixieland Jazz Band.

Leaving the Coney Island job the OM5 went on tour accompanying a dance act on the Orpheum Circuit. The dance act folded in Los Angeles and the OM5 returned to New York, but without Miff. He liked California and chose to remain, securing a job as featured player in a movie house orchestra. He also worked at the Sunset Inn in Santa Monica. The drummer there was Abe Lyman, whose brother owned the place, and Miff stayed about a year. Returning to New York he rejoined the OM5 playing at the Dance Caprice in Brooklyn, followed by a five month engagement at the Bluebird Cafe in Montreal. It was soon afterwards that the OM5 disbanded due to a minor legal controversy. Miff recalls a recording session for Okeh with the group, however none of the sides were issued. Dixieland One Step was one of the unissued.

1919 found Miff with Sam Lanin for a five-year hitch at the Roseland Ballroom on Broadway and a year later he was married.

(Miff has a daughter and two grandchildren). A collective personnel of Sam Lanin's Orchestra during the 1923/1924 period consisted of Michael Masiello and Jules Levy Jr., trumpets; Larry Abbott, Arnold Brilhart, Morris Dixon and Merle Johnston - reeds; Milfred Mole - trombone; Harry Perrella - piano; Anthony Colucci - banjo; Jack Lube - violin; William Short - tuba; Irving Farberman and Sidney Wishnuff - drums; Sam Lanin - director. Miff initially recorded with a Lanin unit in the Summer of 1921. To the best of his recollection it was 'Shake It And Break It' and 'Aunt Hagar's Children's Blues' (Emerson 10439) with Phil Napoleon, trumpet; Doc Berenson, clarinet; Frank Signorelli, piano; and Sam Lanin, himself, playing drums.

Although Mole was a regular member of the Sam Lanin Orchestra from 1919/1924 he was granted the right to be his own free agent for recording purposes. When the Original Memphis Five were reorganized in Jan/Feb 1922 ((Phil Napoleon; trumpet; Charles Panely, trombone... (Miff was to be in the reorganization but he elected to remain with Lanin)... Jimmy Lytell, clarinet; Frank Signorelli, piano and Jack Roth, drums)) and their prolific recording activities got underway, Miff was called in to do the majority of the recording dates. Regular OM5 trombonist, Charles Panely, 1922/1923, apparently made few OM5 records during this period.

In May of 1924 Miff left Sam Lanin to join Ray Miller's Orchestra at the Beaux Arts Club in Atlantic City, New Jersey. Bandmates with Miff were Charles Rocco, Roy Johnston - Trumpets; Frank Trumbauer, Bernard Daly, Andy Sannella - reeds; Andy Sindelair - trombone and Librarian; Don Yates - violin and ass't director; Tom Satterfield - arranger and piano; Harry Perrella - piano; Frank O. Prima - banjo; Louis Chassigne - tuba; Ward Archer - drums. That Fall the Miller band moved into New York's Hippodrome. Bix Beiderbecke and other members of the Wolverines, then playing an engagement at the Cinderella Ballroom, caught one of the performances. When Miff took his first break the boys were so enthused that they howled at the top of their lungs. The management promptly ejected them from the

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## Ray Miller and His Orchestra Open Run at Arcadia In Blaze of Glory

(OCTOBER 1924)



One of the outstanding events in the metropolis last week was the formal opening of the newest and what is said to be the most elaborately equipped dancing palace on Broadway, the Arcadia, which took place last Wednesday evening. Men and women prominent in the social life of the city as well as producers, managers and actors lent color to an evening that will be long remembered by those present.

The most entertaining feature of the evening was the appearance of Ray Miller and his orchestra, exclusive Brunswick recording artists, who have been engaged to appear at this palace of terpsichore for a considerable run. Ray Miller and his organization of talented syncopators have already established themselves solidly in the hearts of the dance lovers of the metropolis through their recent appearances at the Hippodrome and the Palace theatre, because of their unique style of rendering jazz and the magnetic and smile-provoking personality of Ray Miller.

# You Can't Fool The Wax!



130 WEST 47TH STREET  
NEW YORK  
JULIUS ROSENBERG & SONS, INC.

February 11, 1935.

Martin Band Instrument Co.  
Elkhart, Ind.

Gentlemen:

The "New Martin Dansant" Trombone simply is proving to be the best ever. I am using it in all my work, for recording as well as dance work and I want to congratulate you on your wonderful new instrument. The action and mellow tone of the Martin "Dansant" cannot be excelled. I want to particularly mention the clearness of the high notes as well as the low, especially in recording, and one cannot fool the wax. Would like you to hear the Brunswick record of "Glad My Gal" as played by Ray Miller & His Orchestra, with whom I am playing, and also to hear the Brunswick record of the "Prince of Wales" as played by the "Cotton Pickers". In this record I hit a high D<sub>4</sub>. It is a rather high note but not so difficult on a Martin "Dansant".

I am now publishing a Series of "Original Breaks" and "Hot Choruses" and am advertising in several magazines. I hear from Trombone players from all parts of the States and Canada and when they write to me for particulars in regards to my "Breaks" & "Choruses" they all seem anxious to know what make of instrument I use and believe me when I say, I am glad to inform them that I use a Martin "Dansant" Trombone.

Wishing you success and again expressing my sincere happiness in having a perfect instrument, I am  
Sincerely yours,  
*Miff Mole*

253 West 85th St.,  
New York City.

Their  
reputation  
was  
built  
by

FLANAGAN

YOU don't need to "fool the Wax". You have a Martin Dansant Trombone at a cost greater than you would pay for an ordinary horn. And you will have the same instrument that Miff Mole, Larry Conley, Harold Geiser, Dave Boyd and a host of other outstanding Trombonists are using. Write for full information on the Martin Handcraft Dansant Model Trombone.

theatre. In December 1924, Trumbauer and Miff heard Bix for the first time at the Cinderella Ballroom. The result was that the three of them cut the historic Sioux City Six sides, FLOCK O'BLUES, and I'M GLAD on Gennett. Bix and Miff became fast friends and frequently were roommates when Bix came to New York for the Goldkette recording dates.

The Ray Miller band opened the Arcadia Ballroom in New York, spending the winter of 1924-25 there. Miller took off for the road again and Miff left him that spring to join Ross Gorman's Band which opened with the Earl Carroll Vanities early July 1925. Personnel: Milton Suskind - p; Miff Mole - tb; Red Nichols - tp; Don Lindley - tp. & arr; Jack Harris - v; Jules Klein - cymbalon; Tony Colicchio - bnj & v; Saul Sharrow - v; Barney Aquilino - bass & reeds; Nicholas Koulukis - flute & piccolo; Al Evans, Harold Noble, and William McGill, reeds; Jack Koza - tp; Dave Grupp - dms. (Variety, 7/22/25).

Don Voorhees was house conductor for the Earl Carroll theater and conducted the production - Ross directed during intermission when patrons were invited to dance with the chorus girls on the stage. With this change occurred the meeting of Miff Mole and Red Nichols - one which was to produce a musical partnership so significant in respect to musical teamwork, precision playing, good taste, imagination, individual and collective performance, that even today it is seldom equaled, never surpassed. This was a complete meeting of the minds. Each man had a terrific impact upon the other; and the result? ... the classic Red and Miff era which was preceded by their first records together - the 1925 Hottentot period, developed through the Red Heads (1925-early '26 period), and in 1926 found full fruition in the latter day Red Heads, Arkansas Travellers, Six Hottentots, Red and Miff's Stompers, Charleston Chasers, early Five Pennies and early Molers, extending into about mid-1929. Equally important associates included Vic Berton, Jimmy Dorsey, Fud Livingston, Eddie Lang, Adrian Rollini, Arthur Schutt and Joe Venuti. The reason this partnership was such an outstanding success, in an age dedicated largely to "corn," was that each of the partners was

an all-out perfectionist. In spite of the perfectionism of Red and Miff, there was always a sense of humor in their work; yet without clowning or hokum. From mid-1928 on commercialism began to make inroads even into the work of these men, and the subtle, contrapuntal, yet tongue-in-cheek and relaxed style of "classic" Red and Miff began to disappear in favor of larger bands playing "blocked" chord arrangements.

Concurrently with Miff's entrance into the Earl Carroll Vanities band, Rose Gorman directed some record dates which included, in the personnel, Miff, Red, Jimmy Dorsey, Alfie Evans and others. They made a few good sides, definitely bearing the Red and Miff imprint. When Voorhees left, about two months after the opening, Ross Gorman assumed the full conductorship of the Vanities. For one of the big production numbers, RHYTHM OF THE DAY, Miff had to be on stage playing a technical jazz solo with lights flashing madly and other chaotic effects all designed to give the illusion of Hades and to frighten the chorus girls. At the finish the girls were so frightened at Miff's Trombone gymnastics that, one by one, they all leaped into the orchestra pit (padded by stacks of mattresses) with the last downward flight negotiated by Miff, himself. He broke more trombones that way. In order to avoid the impression of an all-out "clam bake," it would be well to point out that the band was stationed in the left lower box - not in the pit!

Roger Wolfe Kahn secured Miff's full time services (apart from his free-lance recording activities) in January, 1926. After Kahn's Biltmore engagement one of his next ventures was to open his own night club, the Peroquet de Paris, on the side of what is now the Little Carnegie Theater on West 57th street, New York. Among others in the band were Vic Berton, Arnold Brilhart, Tony Colucci, Alfie Evans, Tommy Gott, Eddie Lang, Leo McConville, Arthur Schutt and Joe Venuti. They made many discs and Miff remained as a steady "spot" man until September 1927.

During the Kahn period Miff, Bix, Vic Berton, Jimmy Dorsey, and Arthur Schutt assembled for what might have been the greatest recording session of all time. Too bad it didn't come off because,

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*Ross Gorman Vanities Orchestra (Revised personnel)*



no doubt, it would have been. Prior to descending upon the Gennett studios, the boys indulged in some heavy elbow-bending. They were in great shape when they reached the studio and a half hour of rehearsal resulted in a "whing-ding," with the studio official angrily giving them the bum's rush! But that didn't matter - they mounted a Fifth Avenue Double-Decker bus and blew topside all the way home! Miff avers that there were no interruptions from the police department, either.

When Don Voorhees and Red Nichols took over the musical directorship of radio station WOR on a partnership basis they invited Miff to join the staff and, accordingly, after giving notice to Roger Wolfe Kahn in September, 1927, Miff became a "house cat" at WOR. Another historical event took place simultaneously when the Columbia Phonograph Co., also an employer of Voorhees and Nichols, presented the La Palina Cigar Program over WOR and 20 other stations, thereby launching the CBS Radio Network.

Before 1929 was out Miff received an attractive offer from NBC and switched over there. During these various periods Miff was recording constantly for many different leaders and labels; he continued his Moler recordings for Okeh up through early 1930. The Red and Miff association, however, had regrettably terminated in mid-1929.

It was during the NBC stretch that signal tribute was paid to Miff's versatility. In 1934 Ravel's BOLERO was scheduled for performance by the NBC Orchestra, but at an advance rehearsal the conductor, Hugo Mariani, was unhappy over the trombone solo. Several first chair men from major symphony orchestras played the solo for Mariani but he was not satisfied. Finally he conceived the idea of trying a house man whose jazz work he had often admired, and he gave the music to Miff Mole to look over. In Miff's words: "I took the part home, 'wood-shedded' it a bit, and it turned out pretty good." It turned out beautifully and Mariani was delighted. Miff also played under Fritz Reiner and Bruno Walter. When Arturo Toscanini arrived to build his famous NBC Symphony, Miff was offered the second chair. In 1938, however, Paul Whiteman extended an offer to Miff which he accepted.

This was not Whiteman's first attempt to secure Miff - nume-

rous offers were made during the Twenties as were offers from Jean Goldkette. But Miff didn't want to leave New York and his diversified recording activities at the time. Whiteman almost succeeded in early 1927 when he was able to engage Red Nichols, Jimmy Dorsey and Vic Berton. Red didn't affiliate until spring. Miff decided against joining, much to the disappointment of Pops and the rest of the Pennies; but Miff, at that time, preferred playing in small units. Paul was later able to get Tommy Dorsey, who had already made a name with The California Ramblers and Jean Goldkette. Vic Berton left in just two weeks, while Red Nichols left in June to go with Cass Hagan, and the Dorsey brothers remained for most of 1927. At any rate, Miff felt he was getting too far away from jazz at NBC and decided to give the Whiteman deal a try, and just two weeks before Jack Teagarden left in December, 1938 to form his own band, two of the world's greatest jazz trombonists played together.

But Miff had little opportunity to do the real jazz work he wanted and after two years with Whiteman he gave his notice. Upon returning from his last extended Whiteman tour something struck Miff like a bolt of lightning - he discovered that he actually, after all these years did not know HOW or WHY he played the way he did. So Miff hoted up in his cellar for four months of searching self-analysis. At last he discovered some of the whys and wherefores of his styles got them down on manuscript paper, and set about opening up his own trombone school in New York. Miff was a fine teacher and turned out more than fifty pupils. Simultaneously he wrote a trombone column in the International Musician, the official A.F. of M. publication. In addition to teaching, Miff was busy with free-lance radio and recording dates.

One day in August, 1942, Benny Goodman asked Miff to fill in for one of his indisposed trombonists. That one night "fill-in" lasted for one year and Miff had to give up his teaching, a function he had really learned to like. Still desiring a small group affiliation, Miff organized his own Dixieland outfit and opened at Nick's in the Village for a hitch of six years. His associates there included Gene Schroeder, Eddie Condon, Bob Casey, Sterling Bose, Pee Wee Russell, Bobby Hackett, Muggsy Spanier, Marty Marsala and George Wettling.

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ROGER WOLFE KAHN ORCHESTRA - 1927 - From left to right: Joe Raymond, Tony Colucci, Joe Venuti, Vic Berton, Arthur Schutt, RKA, Arnold Brilhart, Tommy Gott, Babe Campbell, Al Evans, Leo McConville, Miff Mole and Harold Sturr.



MUGGSY SPANIER BAND - Blue Note, Chicago - (Oct.24,1947): Sid Horowitz, piano; Dave Tough, drums; Miff Mole, trombone; Tony Parenti, clarinet; Muggsy Spanier, cornet; Bob Casey, bass. (Photo: Courtesy, Tony Parenti)



AT THE BEEHIVE, Chicago - late 40s? - Freddie Greenleaf, trumpet; Miff Mole, trombone; Larnell Howard, clarinet; Baby Dadds, drums; Art Gronwald, hidden pianist. (Photo: courtesy, Miff Mole)

Another year of free-lancing followed the Nick's engagement and in 1947 Miff took off for Chicago where six more years were occupied between three night spots - the Blue Note, the Bee Hive, and Jazz, Ltd. While playing a one-nighter in Chicago, Tommy Dorsey dropped into Jazz Ltd. to listen to Miff. A sports announcer who accompanied Tommy quoted the latter as remarking, in reference to Miff: "You're listening to the Babe Ruth of the trombone"...Miff is the "trombone player's trombone player." Tommy, who was one of Miff's earliest admirers, had a manuscript book in which he had transcribed just about all of Miff's recorded solos.

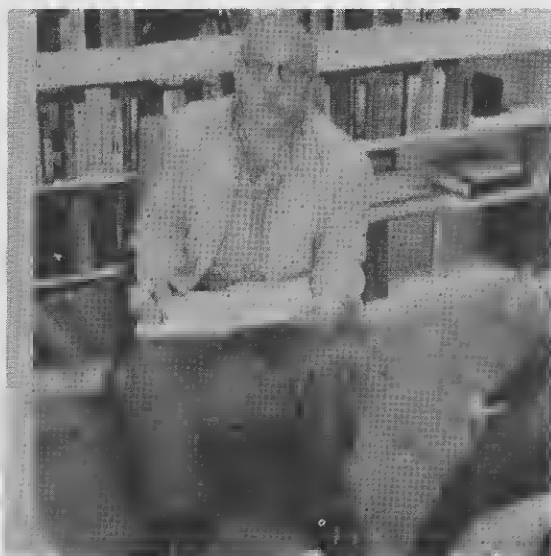
What is it that makes Miff such a standout in the opinion of other great men of that instrument? It is mastery of the complete range of the trombone. He has the symphony man's command of the low register, and then some. Deep, powerful tone down there. His pedal tone range extends a complete octave below the bottom "E" - and he doesn't just honk out a few of these, either, but can play distinguishable melodies and rapid passages. In addition, Miff has the "pop" man's control of the high and extremely high registers. A leap from the bottom to the top registers is accomplished by Miff with such ease as to make it seem almost commonplace. But Miff was never one to make a big deal out of anything; always calm, collected and of imperturbable countenance. Miff attributes much of his so-called "trick" technique to incessant practicing of all intervals - up to and including tenths, thirteenth and beyond. His tone is beautiful, and no one has surpassed his magnificent, rapid technique. As Art Hodes once commented: "much of what Miff does other players can only stand around and listen to." Miff is genuinely modest and self-critical - a rare attribute in an artist. Yet his quiet reserve belies a dry wit and ready sense of humor.

Though one of the outstanding soloists in jazz history, Miff is no prima-donna. His assimilation to any and all types of musical situations is a factor that made him a valuable asset to any musical project demanding just the right interpretation.

A successful craftsman for over four decades, Miff has made and spent a fortune. It was not unusual for him to "go to the store for a screwdriver and come back with a Pierce-Arrow automobile." But life has not been a complete path of roses for Miff Mole. In 1954 he returned to New York from Chicago and underwent three operations as a result of a hip injury sustained as a youth while ice skating. Five more operations followed in the next few years and Miff had to rack up his horn for quite a spell during the recovery period. Needless to say, the cost of all this was devastating. While Miff was in the hospital another tribute was paid him - a "Miff Mole Day" was declared in England and his records were featured on the radio all that day. Today, Miff, the old stalwart, has his trombone out and is again jobbing around. Most recently, he and his Dixieland unit have been a frequent attraction at the Mandalay, a popular little jazz spot in Belmore, Long Island where Miff has featured such companions as Wild Bill Davison, Billy Butterfield, Jimmy McPartland, Buck Clayton, Herman Autry, Bobby Hackett, Wingy Mannone, Joe Dixon, Hank D'Amico, Pee Wee Russell, George Wettling, Sonny Greer, Tony Spargo, Gene Schroeder, Frankie Signorelli, Red Richards and others.

After all these years the effect of Miff's presence upon entering any retreat where musicians congregate is as arresting as it was during his busiest years - all stop to pay their respects, as though they are saying in unison, "here is a great musician - unique jazz interpreter - the man who lifted the trombone from its early jazz role corny, comedy effects to an equal technical status with the cornet, clarinet and saxophone; to a status of complete respectability." Along with Bix Beiderbecke's style, the relaxed, yet exciting style of Miff Mole has already earned its place in jazz immortality.

**MIFF MOLE will have 'his night' at the CENTRAL PLAZA 'Jazz At The Plaza' in New York City. EVERYBODY will be there.**



### ABOUT RICHARD DU PAGE

(Ed. Note: Mr. DuPage, the writer of the Miff Mole story, has a mature musical background. We believe that our readers will find the following miniature biography of interest).

Born in Kansas City, Missouri, 8/10/1908. Studied piano, percussion, and clarinet. Played professionally through prep school and college. Sideman on clarinet, sax and drums 1926 through 1931, touring South, Southwest in U.S. and overseas in France. Formed own band in Nashville, Tenn., 1930 which played Rainbow Gardens, Monticello, N.Y. 1931, a "Borscht Circuit cabaret patronized by" "Legs" Diamond, "Dutch" Schultz. Returned to Nashville in fall, disbanded in December and came back to N.Y. to start arranging career. First arrangements for Ross Gorman (Biltmore), Charlie Dixon, Claude Hopkins (Rose-land), Gene Kardos, Vineent Lopez, Rubinoff.

From 1933, arranger on numerous radio programs which included the following musicians: A. Bernstein, A. Brilhart, M. Bloom, C. Butterfield, W. Bradley, I. Brodsky, J. Colonna, Dorsey Bros., F. Farrar, R. Gorman, C. Hazlett, M. Klein, C. Kress, C. Margulis, D. McDonough, M. Mole, C. Morehouse, B. Rank, A. Rollini, A. Schurt, Teagarden Bros., F. Trumbauer. Conductors included: Irving Aaronson, Don Bestor, Ray Bloch, Hal Kemp, Andre Kostelanetz, Abe Lyman, Geo. Olsen, Raymond Paige, Rudy Vallee, Paul Whiteman, Alfred Wallenstein.

Arranged for Jack Teagarden's big band in 1941.

Arranger on numerous roadway musical productions and major Floor Shows. Composer and Conductor for motion pictures. Elected to ASCAP 1946 on basis of performance of symphonic works.

From 1946 through 1953 Composer-Arranger on music-staff of WOR-Mutual. Wrote background music for many dramatic productions on radio, TV and films. Still active part-time in this field when not working as stockbroker.

Originator of current Columbia LP reissue Album "THESAURUS OF CLASSIC JAZZ" including editing (with very able technical work by engineers JACK ASHKENAZY and EDDIE MICHALSKI), two years research and writing of extensive liner notes coordinated from four separate sets of texts into one by FRANK DRIGGS who also added a historic panorama of the jazz picture in general. Invaluable help was rendered from the business technical end by STANLEY KAVAN of Columbia and from the A. & R. end by TED MACERO and JOHN HAMMOND, general overseer of reissued program whose knowledge of the Perfect Record catalogue ownership made it possible to include the wonderful Red Heads items in Vol. IV which it was previously supposed could not be used. It was also his idea to package the four albums in one attractively covered boxed set. Sales, to date, have been highly satisfactory. All discs used were from the DuPage collection. Full acknowledgement to all concerned, without whose help the project would not have been accomplished, is listed in the liner notes booklet.



john mc andrew

STAR

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## THE HOUSE BANDS OF YESTERDAY - Part 2

In fact, for the first year or so the SHILKRET VICTOR ORCHESTRA sides were practically indistinguishable from those of INTERNATIONAL NOVELTY ORCHESTRA, and included several concert 'standards' that were to be relegated to INTERNATIONAL NOVELTY at first and then to THE TROUBADOURS in the next few years, such as ADIOS, LA PALOMA, O SOLE MIO and LET ME CALL YOU SWEETHEART. These were pleasant, straight performances but affording little opportunity for originality of arrangement or execution. At the same time, glimmerings of the Shilkret pop. organization to be could be noticed in ALL ALONE MONDAY, BARCELONA, LAY ME DOWN TO SLEEP IN CAROLINA and YOU WILL, WON'T YOU. As a matter of fact, from late 1926 to perhaps early in 1928, INTERNATIONAL NOVELTY was the more interesting group, and their sides were far more varied. Their straight fox-trots had distinction, and, augmented, their European waltzes remain, after more than thirty years, the most effective that ever have been recorded of the various pieces, including DANUBE WAVES, BLUE DANUBE, GYPSY LOVE, OVER THE WAVES (a quarter of a century later to become THE LOVELIEST NIGHT OF THE YEAR), ESTUDIANTINA, LUXEMBOURG WALTZ, MERRY WIDOW WALTZ, UNREQUITED LOVE, WALTZ DREAM and GOLD AND SILVER. These were all 12" sides, and for their time the recording and Continental flavor were little short of sensational. That their excellence was indisputable is clearly indicated in the fact that when the Camden LP label was created, many of these identical INTERNATIONAL CONCERT ORCHESTRA originals were issued on several LPs and EPs.

THE TROUBADOURS were being associated almost exclusively with the waltz hits of the day, of which there were many (while today there are almost none), complemented with a sprinkling of standard waltzes such as ROSES OF PICARDY, KISS ME AGAIN, AH! SWEET MYSTERY OF LIFE, and a few of the Continental types heretofore affiliated with INTERNATIONAL NOVELTY, such as CIELITO LINDO, DOLORES, and LA GOLONDRINA. There was a contingent from INTERNATIONAL NOVELTY, called INTERNATIONAL NOVELTY QUARTET, which did several sides aimed at the European market, some of which appeared only on an export series although they could be had domestically on order. CUCKOO WALTZ, LENA, CHIMES OF NORMANDY, SCHNITZEL-BANK and ACH! DU LIEBER AUGUSTIN! were some of these. There were many of the INTERNATIONAL NOVELTY ORCH. sides earmarked for foreign consumption alone, including polkas, schottisches and International favorites such as PARADE OF THE WOODEN SOLDIERS, which included a pipe organ solo. One of the group's loveliest couplings was a mid-1925 release, one of their first electricals, of PRISONER'S SONG, with a vocal by the composer, GUY MASSEY, and AFTER THE BALL, including the attractive and lengthy verse which more often than not is omitted. (Vi 19714).

This early Shilkret period was notable for many outstanding and beautifully arranged show tunes done with a healthy respect for the meaning of the number: ONLY A ROSE/SONG OF THE VAGABONDS (VAGABOND KING); ROAD OF DREAMS (PRINCESS FLAVIA); HALLELUJAH/SOMETIMES I'M HAPPY (HIT THE DECK); RIO RITA/THE KINKAJOU (RIO RITA); THE RIFF SONG/ONE ALONE (DESERT SONG); DESERT SONG (DESERT SONG)/HUGUETTE (VAGABOND KING); O, KATHARINA! (CHAUVE-SOURIS/TITINA (PUZZLES OF 1925); UP IN THE CLOUDS/THINKING OF YOU (FIVE O'CLOCK GIRL); IF I HAD A LOVER/THE TAP-TAP (PADLOCKS OF 1927); DAWN/WE TWO (GOLDEN DAWN); HEADIN' FOR HARLEM/WHEREVER YOU ARE (SIDE WALKS OF NEW YORK); ALL ALONE MONDAY (THE RAMBLERS); MAYBE (GERSHWIN-OH! KAY); WHY DO I LOVE YOU/CAN'T HELP LOVIN' DAT MAN (SHOW BOAT); ONE KISS/SOFTLY, AS IN A MORNING SUNRISE (NEW MOON). Most of these were by SHILKRET AND THE VICTOR ORCH., with an occasional one by INTERNATIONAL NOVELTY or THE TROUBADOURS. Many of the vocals on them were by FRANKLYN BAUR, whose voice was the ideal interpretation of a show number, whether soft and sentimental or light and liling.

With the advent of the talking picture came a rash of theme songs, better recording and more diversified arranging and playing than ever before. Shilkret's Victor orchestra began to develop an irresistible beat, the recordings a greater depth, and jazz musicians were featured in infectious solos wherever the structure and arrangement lent itself to such treatment. There isn't the time or space to dwell on any of these, but I am prepared to crawl 'way out on a limb and declare that there never has been a big band beat to compare with SHILKRET AND THE VICTOR ORCHESTRA at their exciting best; and this, coupled with superb use of fine jazz musicians lending further spice to the otherwise straightforward interpretations came closer to pleasing both the melody lovers and the jazz devotees that any dance band before or since, and is infinitely ahead of the doleful combinations we now get of an overblown group of strings creeping funereally through some of the identical songs performed so imaginatively by Shilkret, with the horrible preconception that sticking BILLY BUTTERFIELD in front of them in some way adds a touch of jazz. The most inexcusable examples of this sort of thing are the dismaying number of LPs that LOUIS ARMSTRONG has allowed himself to be coaxed into turning out with his gorgeous horn completely nullified by a background of faceless strings.

My opinion of the big Shilkret band at its very best, with fine jazz soloists often well to the fore, and very often close enough to them to have been BIX, VENUTI AND LANG and other immortals, are: WHY SHOULD I SAY THAT I'M SORRY (VI 20615); ARE YOU HAPPY? (VI 20899); THAT'S MY WEAKNESS NOW (with a marvelous Bix-like solo); DUSKY STEVEDORE/WHEN SWEET SUSIE GOES STEPPIN' BY (VI 21515); LONESOME IN THE MOONLIGHT (VI 21643); GLAD RAG DOLL (VI 21855); BROADWAY MELODY/YOU WERE MEANT FOR ME (VI 21886); SOME SWEET DAY -- the violin behind the exquisite BAUR vocal is exactly like VENUTI: is it? (VI 21896); WEDDING BELLS/THERE IS A HAPPY LAND (VI 21913); WHO CARES WHAT YOU HAVE BEEN (VI 21960); SING A LITTLE LOVE SONG/HITTIN' THE CEILING -- there is a stunning hot tuba solo in the latter that simply rocks (VI 21969); SUSI ANNA/THE LONESOME ROAD -- the latter with a fine vocal by WILLARD ROBISON himself (VI 21996); AM I BLUE? (VI 22004); GEORGIA PINES (VI 22195); CHANT OF THE JUNGLE/THAT WONDERFUL SOMETHING (VI 22203); MY FATE IS IN YOUR HANDS (VI 22222); BLUE, TURNING GREY OVER YOU (VI 22332); GET HAPPY (VI 22444); OH, HOW I CRIED THE MORNING AFTER (VI 22553).

(TO BE CONTINUED)

*behind*

*the cobwebs*

Carl Kendziora



With the publication of the Pathe-Perfect Catalog coming closer, it may be timely to discuss the relationship between Cameo and Pathe masters. Prior to September 1927 no Pathe masters appeared on Cameo group labels nor did Cameo masters appear on Pathe or Perfect issues. However, the acquisition of the Pathe company by Cameo at this time produced many changes including the interchange of masters and the use of one recording studio to record both the Cameo masters (at about 2630 at this time) and the Pathe masters (at about 107800). From this point on we find many Pathe masters being used on Cameo group labels with assigned Cameo master numbers and many Cameo masters being used on Pathe and Perfect (sometimes showing assigned Pathe master numbers and sometimes not). Some time later we also encounter the practice of co-recording, where one take of a given song title is given a Cameo master and another take is given a Pathe one.

First, however, let us detail a bit the assigned master practice. Since all issues on the Cameo group labels show master numbers printed on the label and impressed in the record material between the last groove and the label, we find that all Pathe masters issued on Cameo group labels have Cameo master numbers assigned to them and duly printed and impressed. The real Pathe number appears only indented in the label surface. The first examples of Cameo masters assigned to Pathe ones that we find are: Ca 2637 which is actually Pat 107631, Ca 2640 which is Pat 107634 and Ca 2641 which is 107630. These are June 1927 Pathe recordings but the date would be September 1927 if the Cameo masters were true numbers rather than assigned ones. Thus, it is important to know whether the master is a true one or an assigned one before using it to attempt to date the recording or to tie it in with adjacent numbers to show a recording session. This may stretch the imagination a bit but we can cite one case of an assigned Cameo master which is six years later than the true Pathe master! Cameo mx. 3732 (which would date as March 1929) is actually Pathe mx. n-70103-1 recorded March 1923 (contemporary mx. in the cameo series to n-70103 would be about 450).

When Cameo masters were used on Pathe-Perfect issues, it is not as easy to determine whether Pathe masters were always assigned to them. This is because Pathe did not print their master number on the label and seldom even impressed them in typescript in the wax. They appeared only in handwriting indented in the surface of the label (except when "Sunken Label" pressings obliterated even that source for obtaining the master number!). It may be that, for bookkeeping purposes, Pathe did assign one of its master numbers to each Cameo one used; this could only be established if we could see their master files which apparently no longer exist. Many of our "missing" Pathe master numbers may actually be numbers assigned to Cameo (or other "foreign" masters used on Pathe-Perfect) masters. On some pressings of Pathe or Perfect issues we find the actual Cameo mx. indented in the label surface in handwriting and also an assigned Pathe mx. in the wax or in the label surface in typescript. But on other copies of the SAME record we will find only the Cameo number. It is your columnist's opinion that they did assign a number to each "foreign" master used.

The co-recording of Cameo and Pathe masters is another facet of this picture. It would appear that if, at a Pathe date, they knew one title of three being cut was to be issued on Cameo group labels as well, they would assign a current Cameo master to one or two of the takes cut. The other take or takes would bear the regular Pathe number. In such a case both master numbers would be true ones and would indicate the date of recording. But, if at a later date they decided to issue a Pathe master on Cameo group, it would get an assigned Cameo master which would date as of the date on which the master was assigned, which might be days, months or years after the actual recording date. As a specific example let us use one of the Ben Pollack recording group dates for Pathe.

Around the last week of November 1928 the Pollack group (The Whoopie Makers) recorded three titles for Pathe. These were "Whoopie Stomp" (108513), "Baby" (108513), and "Bugle Call Rag" (108515). At the time of this session it would appear only the first title was scheduled for issue on Cameo

group labels. This title, "Whoopie Stomp", then was given master numbers in each series. We do not know how many takes were actually cut, so we'll assume for sake of illustration that 4 takes were cut. Thus the first two takes were given the Pathe master number (108513-1 and 108513-2) and the second two takes the Cameo master 3514 (3514-a and 3514-B). About a month later it is decided to release the other two titles on Cameo group also. Thus, Cameo master numbers 3561 and 3562 are assigned to 108514 and 108515 respectively. Now if you find a copy of the Pathe or Perfect issues of any of these titles you will find only the Pathe master number indented in the label surface: 108513-1, 108514-2 and 108515-2. If you find a Cameo group issue of "Whoopie Stomp" you will find printed on the label and impressed in the wax: 3514. Indented in the label surface in handwriting you will find 3514-a; and this will turn out to be an alternate take to 108513-1 on Pathe or Perfect! The other two titles on Cameo group labels will show on label and in wax: 3561 or 3562. And in the label surface in handwriting you will find: 108514-2 or 108515-2. "Whoopie Stomp" is an example of "co-recording" with both 108513 and 3514 being "true" masters indicating a late November recording date. The other two titles are examples of Cameo "assigned masters" whose late December date has no bearing on the date of recording. The "True" masters (in the Pathe series) being the only ones showing the recording date.



Label of the Month: We have an obscure member of the Grey Gull family for our illustration this time. To date we have data on only three or four specimens of this label. We know nothing about its purpose; where it was sold, for what price or for how long a period of time. Those few seen or reported have been in almost as many different number series as discs seen! 30000, 32000, 33000! The label is Sunrise and we'd need technicolor to do justice to it! The black and white cut can only show the general design. "Sunrise", "The Record of Today" and the stylized clouds are in gold! There is an orange-red rising sun, complete with streamers. All the foregoing appear against a black background; from which the camera's unable to distinguish the orange-red. Titling is in black lettering on what

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 24)

# RHYTHM & BLUES

By  
ANTHONY  
ROTANTE

## L.C. WILLIAMS

Using Mean And Evil/ All Through My Dreams (Bayou 008) as recorded examples of L.C. WILLIAMS we find L.C. to be a very competent blues-singer with down-home overtones. Apparently he derived inspiration from the superbe Lightning Hopkins guitar and the knocking blues piano of Elmore Nixon (All Through My Dreams). Yet, on some of the sides where he is accompanied by a small band he is not as effective. He becomes just another jump-blues shouter.

ALL FOLLOWING RECORDINGS DATE FROM ABOUT 1947/1951

L.C. WILLIAMS (vo) with Orch. Unknown personnel  
WHY DON'T YOU COME BACK EDDIE'S 1203  
I DON'T WANT YOU BABY " "  
(Note: Freedom F1501 - CONNEY'S COMBO 'I Don't Want You Baby/  
Won't You Come Back' may be similar to Eddie's 1203)

acc. J. C. Conney Combo  
1148 SHOUT BABY SHOUT FREEDOM F1517  
1141 ETHEL MAE " "

same.  
SMK 1229 JELLY ROLL FREEDOM F1524  
SMK 1230 LOUISIANA BOOGIE " "

L. C. WILLIAMS (vo); Elmore Nixon(p); Lightnin' Hopkins(g)  
1277 ALL THROUGH MY DREAMS FREEDOM F1529  
1278 MEAN AND EVIL BLUES " "  
(see Imperial 5195 and Bayou 008)

L.C. 'LIGHTNIN' JR' WILLIAMS (vo); (unknown p); Lightnin Hopkins  
(amplified g).  
TRYING TRYING GOLD STAR 614, OOT 1052  
YOU'LL NEVER MISS THE WATER " " " "  
(OOT as L.C. WILLIAMS)

L.G. WILLIAMS (vo) acc. Lightnin' Hopkins (amplified g)  
Houston ca. 1948  
HOLE IN THE WALL GOLD STAR 623  
BOOGIE ALL THE TIME " "

L.G. WILLIAMS -no details-  
BLACK WOMAN GOLD STAR 648  
I WON'T BE HERE LONG " "

L.C. WILLIAMS (vo) acc. Lightnin' Hopkins (amplified g)  
YOU CAN'T TAKE IT WITH YOU BABY GOLD STAR 667  
STRIKE BLUES " "

TAP DANCING BY L.C. WILLIAMS ON THE FOLLOWING LIGHTNIN'  
HOPKINS RECORDINGS (Source: Jazz Monthly - 11/59, p.26)

LIGHTNIN' BOOGIE GOLD STAR 664  
J 479 TAP DANCE OOOOGIE SIW/JAX 642  
J 483 PAPA BONES BOOGIE SIW/JAX 652

(note - SIW is SITTIN IN WITH)  
L.C. WILLIAMS (vo) acc Lightnin' Hopkins (Amplified g)

ca. 1948  
J 476 SO SORRY SIW/JAX 640  
J 477 BABY CHILD " " "

J 484 THE LAZY J SIW/JAX 648  
J 487 FANNIE MAE " " "

L.C. WILLIAMS - no details -  
ca. 1951  
5009 DON'T WANT NO WOMAN MERCURY 8276  
9010 LOUISE " "

L.C. WILLIAMS (vo); Elmore James(p); Lightnin' Hopkins(g).  
IM 421 \*ALL THROUGH MY DREAMS IMPERIAL 5195  
IM 422 WANT MY BABY BACK " "

\*MEAN AND EVIL  
MY DARKEST HOUR  
(\* Same as FREEDOM 1529)

BAYOU 008  
" "

L.C. WILLIAMS was born March 12, 1924 in Milligan, Texas. He died of Tuberculosis on October 18, 1960. An obituary by Paul Oliver and Mack McGermick appeared in JAZZ MONTHLY, March 1961. According to the obit. L.C. WILLIAMS recorded again a few weeks before his death with Luke 'Long Gone' Miles. (Discographical details are lacking).

## SISTER BESSIE GRIFFIN

We intend to publish more discographies of gospel singers and in this issue we're presenting SISTER BESSIE GRIFFIN who has been quite active on the West Coast at the Renaissance in Los Angeles California.

BROWNIE MCGHEE recalled recording with SISTER BESSIE GRIFFIN about 1949. Perhaps it was he who served as the guitarist (guitar solos can be heard on DOWN ON MY KNEES and NOTHING LIKE THE HOLY SPIRIT). Who's the fine stamp-down pianist who really sanctifies the excellent gospel singing by the Sister?

SISTER BESSIE GRIFFIN (vo); (p); (g); (trape)  
C 2008 I'VE GOT A HOME ETERNAL IN HEAVEN SIW 2014  
C 2009 IN THE CITY (Arranged by T. Shad) SIW 2008  
C 2010 SHAKE MY MOTHER'S HAND SIW 2010  
C 2011 DOWN ON MY KNEES SIW 2005  
C 2012 " "  
C 2013 HEAVEN'S RADIO SIW 2010  
C 2014 I'M GONNA TELL IT (Arranged by T.Shad) SIW 2005  
C 2015 NOTHING LIKE THE HOLY SPIRIT (Arranged by S.Shad) SIW 2008

(no details on C 164, 166, 171)

C 164 MY TROUBLE IS HARD SIW 2011  
C 165 \*I'M BOUND FOR HIGHER GROUND (Arranged by B.Shad) SIW 2006  
C 166 I SING BECAUSE I'M FREE SIW 2011  
C 167 " "  
C 168 \*GET RIGHT WITH GOD (Arranged by B.Shad) SIW 2006  
C 169 " "  
C 170 " "  
C 171 SHE WALKS WITH ME SIW 2014

\*As by THE SOUTHERN REVIVALISTS OF NEW ORLEANS. It is our opinion that Sister Bessie Griffin as lead singer can be heard in this unaccompanied female (quartet?) group.

BESSIE GRIFFIN (no details)  
BLESSED MOTHER SPECIALTY 890  
HEAVEN " "

BESSIE GRIFFIN (no details) ca. 1956  
P 100 STORY OF JOB BLUE LAKE 1000  
P 101 WHAT JESUS MEANS TO ME " "

BESSIE GRIFFIN AND THE GOSPEL PEARLS Los Angeles, 1960  
I BELIEVE LIBERTY LHM 13002 (\*\*)  
BYE AND BYE and LSS 14002(\*\*)  
LORD DON'T MOVE THE MOUNTAIN " "  
SOMETIMES I FEEL LIKE A MOTHERLESS CHIL " "  
(plus 8 other titles) " "  
(\*) Monaural, (\*\*) Stereo

\*\*\*\*\*COMING\*\*\*\*\* soon  
a big double issue with a surprising history-making feature. It shall be one of the greatest discographical works ever presented in any magazine

# JOHN LEE HOOKER'S FIRST RECORDING SESSION

## reported by Bill Randle

Gentlemen,

Here is the information on John Lee Hooker that I mentioned in my earlier letter to you (printed in RR two issues back). BERNARD BESMAN was a record distributor in Detroit, Michigan from the mid-1940's until 1952 when he moved to California to go into the toy business. MR. BESMAN IS UNQUESTIONABLY THE FIRST PERSON TO EVER RECORD JOHN LEE HOOKER AND SHOULD RECEIVE THE CREDIT FOR SUCH A DISCOVERY IN THE JOURNALS AND DISCOGRAPHIES FROM THIS POINT ON. I was a disc jockey in Detroit at the time and wrote you some of the details earlier. Here is the resume of Hooker's first session, how it came about, the produced materials, etc.

Besman was a very successful record distributor, particularly in what was then called race records (or rhythm and blues) and jazz records. Besman also was in the record business and had recorded and released records by Todd Rhodes (former pianist with McKinney's, etc.) and Teddy Buckner (former alto player with Jimmie Lunceford). It was common knowledge among the Negro musicians' cliques that he was available to talent and wanted to record new people. One snowy day (Besman recalls it as a particularly bad day) Hooker came to Pan American Record Distributing's offices on Woodward Avenue trying to get a recording session.

Besman writes: "As I approached him he started to stutter and I could barely understand anything that he was trying to say. I took his dub (he was carrying a worn out paper record) and put it on the turntable. The dub was really quite worn, and it was hard to determine what you were expected to hear. The dub had been made at a coin machine where you deposit 25¢ and get a paper record."

After talking to Besman for a while John Lee quieted down and stopped stuttering. And Besman admits "Frankly I don't know what prompted me to say to him that if he had four songs I would make a session with him. The session was made in Detroit at United Sound. Besman writes "John was scared, wasn't used to the mikes, and kept popping constantly. I felt there was something lacking to give him confidence. I finally located a wooden board and put it under his feet (the studio had rugs), and by hearing himself tap out the beat it gave him encouragement. I've always recorded him with a board so that he can hear himself tapping out the beat. Even now, when I saw him at a concert recently at UCLA, I wished that somebody would have put a mike near his feet and then the audience would really enjoy his music the way he portrays it."

Besman continues "Back to the session: We struggled through "Sally Mae" (which he thought was his best number) about ten times. By the time we had recorded three numbers, two hours and fifty five minutes had elapsed. I needed four numbers. The session is usually four hours and I wanted to terminate it. So I told John to play a boogie; anything as long as it sounds like a boogie. So he did, putting in some ad lib words, and we had a boogie for the fourth tune. I called it "Boogie Chillen."

Besman's letter continues "We distributed the record in Michigan and leased the master to Modern Records for the rest of the country. As it turned out the number that I had spent a lot of time recording got lost, and the number that I used as a fill in turned out to be the hit side. However, I feel that "Sally Mae" is the best record that I've done with John Lee Hooker. He sings that number right from his heart."

With the success of John Lee Hooker's "Boogie Chillen" Besman recorded many things with him. He also served as an agent and manager for Hooker. I recall when we hired him through Besman in 1949 and 1950. Besman says he "all in all recorded 48 sides with Hooker." He says that most of them are untitled and have not ever been released. He says "I've noticed that many of the numbers out on other labels are similar to the records I have, but

one thing is sure: all of my recordings are original, because John never sings the same tune twice in the same manner. It is only after the record is out that he will emulate the record. In most cases I would give John the subject matter and he would go to it and in three minutes we would have a version of a master. After the first session I would usually accept the first cut unless there were technical difficulties. The sessions were a breeze and most enjoyable."

Besman continues "I trust that the people will recognize his talent soon. It has been a hard road for him."

Besman split with John Lee for the usual reasons, other people wooed him after the initial success of Boogie Chillen and "he'd record for anyone and anytime. So I gave up."

The actual date of the first session is not available but it was in November of 1948. The sides recorded then were "Sally Mae," "Highway 51," "Wednesday Evening Blues," and "Boogie Chillen."

Incidentally Besman, as a result of my letter, is activating his unreleased Hooker masters and is putting them out on his own label this week. The first release is "Ballad to Abraham Lincoln" and "Mojo Hand" (Louisiana Voodoo). The label is Lauren and interested people can contact Besman at 5920 Smiley Drive, Culver City, California. His telephone there is Bradshaw 2-5603. Among the other artists Besman first recorded in Detroit were Sonny Stitt, Todd Rhodes, Ted Buckner, Milt Jackson, Wild Bill Moore (tenor sax), Jack Surrell, Don Juan, Vocalaires, Spiritual Men, Doc Wiley, T.J. Fowler, Sylvester Cotton, Swing Brothers, Louis Barnett (tenor player), Andrew Dunham, Christine Randall, Chano Pozo, John Lewis, etc. 90% of these materials are pure rhythm and blues, vintage 1948-1952. He had a number of hit records, "Bell Boy Boogie" by Todd Rhodes sold three quarters of a million, Hooker, etc. were very big. None of his records were ever sold, many were leased to Modern, King, and other labels around the country.

The above materials are from several telephone calls and a long letter (dated: March 15, 1961) from Bernie Besman. The information is confirmed by my own knowledge of the Detroit scene at the time, the memo records at United Sound Studios, and conversations with John Kaplan, Mr. Besman's former partner in Pan-American Distributing (now J.K. Distributing) in Detroit.

Sincerely yours,

Bill Randle, Station WERE, Cleveland, Ohio.

## RIM CHIPS



"Of course I deducted hot jazz records as a medical expense! My doctor recommended that I exercise more."



As we grow older nostalgia sets in. So let's discuss the RCA LP "The Best of Eddie Cantor" with Henri Rene and his Orchestra. As Stanley Green points out in the liner notes, "There is always an air of youthfulness about an Eddie Cantor performance . . . and even though he was sixty-five when he recorded these selections, it is hard to imagine them ever having been done before with greater exuberance and spirit." While the album necessarily features songs by Cantor, show tunes associated with him over the years, Eddie may never have had a similar high quality musical backing. Hence, these notes are devoted primarily to the musicians on the sessions.

This can not be classed as a jazz album although jazz is the basic motivating force. Considering what the album is supposed to represent, it is solid lasting entertainment -- the musical quality sets it apart from earlier efforts. The music was arranged and conducted by Henri Rene. Vocal arrangements are credited to Bill Thompson. The sessions were produced by Herman Diaz, Jr.

All the musicians on these dates are real pros of long standing. The brassmen -- especially Red Nichols, Pete Beilmann, and Country Washburne -- are standouts on several short solos. Perry Botkin comes through strongly on several well-placed banjo spots. Tasty displays are also provided by Curley Williams and Matty Matlock.

The material was originally issued on Vik LX-1119 with spoken voice track introductions by Cantor. When the set was reissued on Camden CAL-531 these intros were deleted. Here is the discographical information:

JUNE 24, 1957 - Hollywood, California

Rene (leader); Bobby Guy, Pete Candoli, Red Nichols (tp); Frances Joe Howard, Pete Beilmann (tb); Ted Nash, Jules Kinsler, Dave Harris, Lawrence Wright (reeds); John "Curley" Williams Jr. (p); Perry Botkin (bjo/g); Country Washburne (st. b.); John Cyr, Max Albright (dm & effects).

H4PB-3096	Waiting For The Robert E. Lee	Side 2 Track 1
" 3097	Ballin' The Jack	Side 2 Track 4
" 309B	If You Knew Susie (Like I Know Susie)	Side 1 Track 2
" 3099	Josephine Please No Lean on the Bell	Side 1 Track 5

JUNE 25, 1957 - Hollywood, California

Rene (leader); Bobby Guy, Pete Candoli, Red Nichols (tp); Matty Matlock (cl); Wilbur Schwartz, Jules Kinsler, Lawrence Wright (saxes); Curley Williams (p); Perry Botkin (bjo/g); Country Washburne (st. b.); John Cyr, Max Albright (dm & effects), plus 8 violins, and Bill Thompson Singers - Loulie Jean Norman, Sue Lyttle, Peggy Clark, Ralph Brewster, and Tom Kenny.

H4PB-3100	Ain't She Sweet	Side 2 Track 5
" 3101	Makin' Whoopee	Side 1 Track 3
" 3102	Margie	Side 2 Track 2
" 3103	Ida, Sweet as Apple Cider-vocal gr.	Side 2 Track 3

JUNE 26, 1957 - Hollywood, California

Rene (leader); Red Nichols (c); Pete Beilmann (tb); Matty Matlock (cl); Babe Russin (saxes); Curley Williams (p); Perry Botkin (bjo); Country Washburne (tuba); John Cyr (dm), and Bill Thompson, Singers.

H2PB-3104	Baby Face - vocal group	Side 2 Track 6
3105	Ma (He's Making Eyes at Me) - vocal group	Side 1 Track 1

(CONTINUED ON COLUMN TO RIGHT) 13

## BEYOND THE IMPRESSION

REPORTED BY JOHN STEINER

### POP FOSTER'S EARLY RECORDS

Pops Foster has given me an assignment for which I ask aid from Record Researchers. In about 1923 he recalls recording perhaps 4 cylinders with the GOLDEN WHISPERING BAND of New Orleans. He thinks these records were issued in New Orleans - they were recorded there. Two of the titles he now remembers were PANAMA and CLARINET MARMALADE. In the band were Eddie Allen (and Sidney Desvigne, trumpets; Johnny St. Cyr, banjo; Harvey Lankford, trombone; Thornton Blue, clarinet, and Pops.

I read Sam Charters paragraph on Pops to Pops and he approved it, except that he said his middle name was Murphy not "Pops". If the paragraph is correct, it is implied that the cylinders may have been cut much earlier than 1923 as he had earlier estimated.

Pops having scored with us discographically, then asked if we were aware of a recording date for Gennett in which he had participated with Vic Dickenson, John Nesbitt, Manzie Johnson and either Kirkpatrick or one of the Johnson brothers on piano (both Kirkpatrick and the Johnson boy had been with the band in this period). The recording was done in NYC. Again Help! Help!

In a discussion of the Creath band Pops recalled that Charlie's wife Pauline Creath was the band's pianist, that Eddie Allen was a trumpeter after Leonard Davis, that Red Muse was one of their drummers (possibly replaced by Zutty), that Sonny (Sam?) Long was a trombonist (not saxman as indicated in J.I.), that James "Banjo Pete" Robinson (rather than Pete Patterson as in J.I.?) was one of their plectrists. We'll try Bob Schoffner and Al Wynn for confirmation of these names and spellings.

Pops OK'd the information on him in Sam Charters' book. Speaking about Marable's band he said that Alexander Lewis was their earliest drummer; however, he chose not to go up the river with the Marable band. Dadds did. Before going up the river, Marable had on cornet Perez, Henry Kifer (?), Peter Bocage and then Armstrong. In the earliest Marable riverboat band Pops recalled Joe Howard (who taught L. A.), clarinetist Sam Dutrey (brother of Honore), trombonist Baby Ridgley who soon left for the West Coast, Dave Jones and Marahle who played sax with the band as well as piano.

Other points of clarification from Pops were:

Joe and John Robechiaux are not related.

Both Eddie Vincon and Eddie Atkins played trombone at various times with the Original Creoles.

Although Bacquet left N.O. with the Creoles, Louis Nelson was the clarinetist on their theater tour of 1914-1917.

In his evaluation of early trumpet players, Pops said of Buddy Bolden that he was "just a loud trumpet player"; of Tick Chambers that he "played more like Buddy Petit than any of the guys - made all those nice things"; of Sugar Johnny "he was a good trumpet player."

When we went to visit Bob Schoffner, Pop greeted the youthful, looking, robust trumpeter with "Gimme one of your pills, man."

" 3106	Yes Sir, That's My Baby	vocal group	Side 1 Track 1
" 3107	How Ya Gonna Keep 'Em Down	on the Farm	Side 1 Track 4

The Radio Corporation of America is acknowledged for supplying the personnel data above.



## BLUES IN REVIEW

\* \* \* \* \*

by Barry Hansen

**LIGHTNING HOPKINS: LAST OF THE GREAT BLUES SINGERS**  
(Time T-70004, 12" LP)

Hello Central; Coffee Blues; Long Way from Texas; Mad as I Can Be; New Short-Haired Woman; Gotta Move; Everybody's Down on Me; Freight Train; Prayin' Ground Blues; Don't Think I'm Crazy; Dirty House Blues; Everything Happens to Me. Vocals with guitar and bass.

The only thing wrong with this album is the title. Otherwise it is a beautiful set in every way. It is another set of reissues from Lightnin's salad days in the early fifties. The recordings, made by Bob Shad and released under various labels on 78's, have been cleaned up remarkably well.

Listening to these performances today, with today's terse, compact singles in mind, it is hard to believe that these discursive, improvised performances were once singles, and best-sellers too. Some of Lightnin's best singing ever is on this disc, with guitar playing ranging from good to fabulous. The bass stays far in the background and doesn't interfere at all. This is as good as anything Lightnin' has done on records.

**LITTLE BROTHER MONTGOMERY: TASTY BLUES**  
(Prestige-Bluesville 1012)

Little Brother Montgomery, vocal and piano; Julian Euell, bass; Lafayette Thomas, guitar.

Tasty Blues; Santa Fe; How Long, Brother?; Pleading Blues; No Special Rider; Brother's Boogie; Sneaky Pete Blues; Something Keeps Worrying Me; Cry, Cry Baby; Sattelite (sic) Blues; Deep Fried; Vicksburg Blues.

This comeback album of a fine old blues pianist is, unfortunately, a rather shallow affair. The title describes it fairly well; this is dinner music. About half the tracks are instrumentals, mostly slow blues; they are effective mood pieces. Listenable but rather weak piano playing combine with bland guitar work. His attempt at boogie sounds more like Hadda Brooks than like Pinetop Smith. His singing sounds like city blues from the 40's, and belabors some rather tiresome effects. His new versions of VICKSBURG BLUES and NO SPECIAL RIDER are pale shadows of their old selves. It is wonderful to hear Montgomery again, but this set simply fails to come alive.

**SLIM'S SHOUT: SUNNYLAND SLIM**  
(Prestige-Bluesville 1016)

I'm Prison Bound; Slim's Shout; The Devil Is A Busy Man; Brownskin Woman; Shake It; Decoration Day; Baby How Long; Sunnyland Special; Harlem Can't Be Heaven; It's You Baby.

Sunnyland Slim (Albert Luandrew), vocal & piano; King Curtis, tenor sax; Robert Banks, electric organ, Leonard Gaskin, bass Belton Evans, drums.

Sunnyland Slim is one of the grand old men of the blues; he has recorded with Blind Boy Fuller, Muddy Waters, and many more as well as under his own name. He is remembered for his "Dr. Clayton's Buddy" discs in the 1940's (Victor) and recently has recorded for Cobra. He calls this "the best session I ever had in my life," and he's had some great ones. True enough, this is a fine album. It is blues all the way, the city blues at its best. Included are some great standards, fine original blues, and jamming sessions on SLIM'S SHOUT and SUNNYLAND SPECIAL. Slim's singing style is reminiscent of Big Joe Turner's, and his voice is almost as good. His rolling piano is very fine, and Curtis' sax honks right along in the best R&B manner. The organ almost justifies its presence. This kind of music has never been so well reproduced, technically. This album is a real joy to have.

## CONTINENTAL JAZZDISCOLOGY

By HAROLD FLAKSER

### SPECIAL TO RECORD RESEARCH

by Harold Flakser

Veteran jazz pianist, Freddy Johnson, died in St. Barnabas Hospital, The Bronx, N. Y., on Friday, March 24th, 1961, at approximately 1:00 P.M. He was 57 and had been in ill health for several years. Cause of death: cancer.

Masonic Services were held at the Chapel, 445 - Lenox Ave., N. Y. C. on Tues., March 28th, at 8:00 P.M. and Funeral Services were held at St. Martin's Protestant-Episcopal Church (Lenox Ave. at 122nd St.), N. Y. C. on Wed., 29th, at 12 Noon. Interment: "The Evergreens" Cemetery.

Noted at the Masonic Services were the following: Herb Flemming, Ernest "Bass" Bill, Joe Heyman, Eubie Blake and Gene Bullard. And the following mourners were noted at St. Martin's P.-E. Church on the following day: Ernest "Bass" Hill, Noble Sissle, Eubie Blake, Andy Kirk, Cle Saddler, Ralph James, Johnny Russell, Zutty Singleton and Louis Metcalf.

From a recording point of view, Freddy's most productive period was the decade from 1929-'39. He spent almost sixteen years on the Old Continent (June 1928-March 1944), the last 27 months in a German internment camp.

His European-cut recordings include:

Sam Wooding: Pa(Sp), Pat(F), Poly(F) (1929)

Own: Br(F) (1933)

Maceo Jefferson: Sal (P) (1933)

Own: De(H) (1934)

Benny Carter/Dutch Ramblers: De(H)/Vo(E) (1937)

Coleman Hawkins: De/Pana (H) (1937-8)

Own: Sw(F) (1939)

Louis Bacon: Sw(F) (1939).

NOTE: The accompanying photo of Freddy Johnson was taken in Antwerp, April, 1938.







# RECORD RESEARCH

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Our last issue was No. 12 (no longer available). Issue 13 is  
in the preparation stage and will be dispatched when com-  
pleted to all our active subscribers.

# THE AMERICAN MINSTREL THEATRE ON PHONOGRAPH RECORDS

1894-1929

A. R. Danberg

(Continued from  
issue 33)

## Part 8

The 1911 Sears Robuck Catalogues advertised "Indestructible Cylinders" for 27¢ apiece, including many minstrel performances. These were on the "Oxford" label, perhaps cheap re-issues of Edison or Columbia matrices.

MNA Oxford 654  
DIXIE MINSTRELS #1

MNA Oxford 655  
DIXIE MINSTRELS #2

MNA Oxford 807  
DIXIE MINSTRELS #3

MNA Oxford 863  
DIXIE MINSTRELS #4

MNA Oxford 1013  
DIXIE MINSTRELS #5

MNA Oxford 1124  
DIXIE MINSTRELS #6

MNA Oxford 1231  
DIXIE MINSTRELS #7

There was also a "Rambler Minstrel" series:

MNA Oxford 720  
RAMBLER MINSTRELS #1

MNA Oxford 741  
RAMBLER MINSTRELS #2

MNA Oxford 789  
RAMBLER MINSTRELS #3

MNA Oxford 790  
RAMBLER MINSTRELS #4

MNA Oxford 871  
RAMBLER MINSTRELS #5

MNA Oxford 963  
RAMBLER MINSTRELS #6

MNA Oxford 988  
RAMBLER MINSTRELS #7

MNA Oxford 1056  
RAMBLER MINSTRELS #8

MNA Oxford 1078  
RAMBLER MINSTRELS #9

MNA Oxford 1146  
RAMBLER MINSTRELS #10

MNA Oxford 1184  
RAMBLER MINSTRELS #11

MNA Oxford 5190A-8  
RAMBLER MINSTRELS #12  
"When the 8 and Strikes Up Dixie,"  
"Smiling Star."

& RAMBLER MINSTRELS #13  
"Down in Georgia Camp Meeting  
Day," "L-O-V-E spells Trouble  
to Me."

MNA Oxford 5508A-B  
RAMBLER MINSTRELS #14  
& " " #15

MNA Oxford 5571A-8  
RAMBLER MINSTRELS #16  
& " " #17

The "Carolina Minstrels" had three records, Oxford 3012, 3075, and 3138. Other numbers on the Sears Robuck Oxford label described as "Minstrels" included the following (no matrix numbers available): 3448, 4016, 31609, 13000, 32952, 13001, 31691, 33161, 13004, 33031, 13002, 33104, and one more record for which the matrix number is available --

4017- Oxford 4017  
2-13 MINSTRELS "Smiling Star"  
Orc. Acc.

In 1921 the Sears catalogue was offering Columbia records. They advertised one minstrel record.

MNA Columbia A 5173 12 inch  
MINSTRELS  
"Linden Green", "Fly, Fly, Fly,"  
"My Rosy Rambler"  
& "My Uncle's Farm" -  
Golden and Hughes

(To be Continued)

On March 9, 1961, our great friend and inspiration, Wilbur Sweatman, 'the daddy of the jazz clarinet', passed on. In a forthcoming issue we shall enumerate his deeds which were many.

FORM 3547 REQUESTED

RECORD RESEARCH  
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## BEHIND THE COBWEBS

- Kendziara - (continued)

looks like a white panel in the cut, but is actually of variegated light pink and gray shades. Our illustrated specimen is Sunrise 30034: (a) If I'm Dreaming (3789A) as by Twilight Dance Orchestra, Waltz with Vocal Chorus/ (b) I Love You Believe Me I Love You (3784A) as by Bear Cat Jazzers, Fox Trot with Vocal Chorus. These masters date as late 1929 (mx 3857 is Jan. 24, 1930) and this is verified by the tune dates. The first song was copyrighted on Oct. 16, 1929 and the second is from the 1929 film "The Vagabond Lover." Further facts regarding this very obscure Grey Gull product are urgently needed. Anything which might reveal the time span of the label, where marketed, price, etc. might be of great help. So who can contribute something about Sunrise?

No space this time for any of our other column features like thumbnail resumes of labels or obscure records of the month. There are many who have written us and we have not replied. The typing of the Perfect Catalog has taken so much of our time that we've had to neglect correspondence to a far greater degree than usual. We'll try to get to it shortly as the typing is nearly finished now! Write to Salem Rd., RFD 2, Pound Ridge, New York or c/o this magazine. Until next time.